

How is metaphysics possible: on the way to transcendental metaphysics¹

Abstract. The answer to the question «How is metaphysics possible?» can be received with the help of Kant's transcendental method. Discussing the possibility of metaphysics Kant distinguishes two modes of it: metaphysica naturalis and metaphysica as a science. Therefore, the possibility of metaphysics is divided into two sub-questions. Postulated by Kant, *metaphysica naturalis*, which underlies philosophy, associated with active "kraft" of mind and roots in metaphysics of the language connected with the sense of language (conceptual and categorial) and its formal–structural nature. Thereby the man is *homo metaphysicus*. Before discussing the possibility of a "scientific" metaphysics it is necessary to consider, first of all, that metaphysics *per se* consists of metaphysica generalis and metaphysica specialis, and secondly, the development of it includes three historical modes: antiquity meta-physics (ontology), meta-psychology (epistemology) of modern era and Kantian transcendental metaphysics. The possibility of metaphysica generalis (or transcendental ontology) is manifested by specific ontological (transcendental) predicates, i.e. categories in the Kantian sense, which exist in our language. The possibility of metaphysica specialis (or transcendental metaphysics) is manifested by impredicative wholeness, or *encompassing totalities* (comp. with *the Encompassing (das Umgreifende)* of K. Jaspers), which determine the appropriate regional ontology (Husserl).

* * *

Postmodernism (and not only it) proclaimed the thesis about the death of metaphysics or philosophy. Can we agree with this thesis? Do we have to accept this thesis or we can still speak about further development of metaphysical tradition nowadays? I argue that philosophy/metaphysics in the 21st century is assuming new forms and it was this life renewal process with all its difficulties, typical for each process of development, which was taken as its death.

To resolve this dilemma it is necessary to find out own — transcendental -- basis of metaphysics, i.e. to raise Kant's transcendental question "How is metaphysics possible?"

(In the beginning I notice that my talk isn't one, but it consists four mini-talks, each of which is relatively autonomous. Therefore, it is a meta-talk. This is due to the fact that the question about the possibility of metaphysics can be considered in four different meanings of the term "metaphysics".)

The term «metaphysics» can be understood in following four different senses:

1. **Metaphysics as a philosophy in general** or as "first philosophy" (*prōtē philosophia*, 'primary philosophy; Aristotle)

2. **Metaphysics as a natural disposition** of the human mind/reason/consciousness. This is *metaphysica naturalis* according to Kant.

Finally, **metaphysics as a science** (Kant), or metaphysics *per se* in strictly (professional) sense. Metaphysics *per se* consists of *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* (Wolff; Kant):

3. **metaphysica generalis**

4. **metaphysica specialis.**

¹ See this paper: <http://transcendental.ucoz.ru/forum/9-42-1#4554>; http://transcendental.ucoz.ru/fr/0/katr_wcp2013.pptx, See my other basic articles on this theme: 1. Katrechko S.L. *Philosophy as Metaphysics* (XX World Congress of Philosophy, 1998; www.bu.edu/WCP); 2. Katrechko S. *How is metaphysics possible?* (XXI WCP, 2002); 3. Katrechko S. *How is metaphysics of XXI century possible?* (XXII WCP, 2008); 4. Katrechko S. *How metaphysics is possible?* (XI INTERNATIONALER KANT-KONGRESS, 2009).

In my talk I will try to briefly answer the question about the possibility of each of these modi of metaphysics and to describe the transcendental modification and development of each of them.

Part 1. Three paradigms of Metaphysics. Transcendental paradigm of metaphysics

The development of philosophy includes two historical modes or paradigms of metaphysics. European metaphysics begins with Parmenides’ discover of the meta-physical reality of the Unity in its difference from the physical reality of the Plurality. This fact of the birth of metaphysics defines its first boarder or mode. Metaphysics becomes here research of *Unity (Being)* intent to investigate the first principle of being. Thus, Parmenid starts an ontological mode of metaphysics which is further developed by Plato, Aristotle, and other great thinkers of the Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This mode of metaphysics can be called the **metaphysics of the object(s)** or the metaphysics of thing(s). The main subject/theme (but no “subject” in philosophical sense!) of this metaphysics is the study of existing things.

But more precise this type of metaphysics can be called (ontological) **transcendent metaphysics**, because it postulates the existence of a transcendent reality. This is metaphysics as **meta-physics**.

The second mode of metaphysics will be associated with the “epistemological turn” in modern era, with the discovery by Descartes a new type of reality – our (human) subjective reality, reality of our consciousness, or Cogito. This mode of metaphysics is the **metaphysics of the (conscious) subject** and can be called **epistemological meta—psychology**. It is **immanent metaphysics**.

Let's introduce a third type or paradigm of metaphysics. It is based on Kantian philosophy and linked with a transition to a transcendental perspective. Kant calls the philosophy transcendental if it “is not so much occupied with objects as with the mode of our cognition of these objects, so far as this mode of cognition is possible a priori.” (CPR, B25) (I would notice that for this talk more important first part of definition: “is not so much occupied with object s as with the mode of our cognition of these objects...”).

Thus Kant defines **transcendental shift** in the understanding of the subject of metaphysics, the transition from analysis of objects to analysis of our mode of it’s cognition. This is “shift” from the Object (things) toward the Subject (cogito), but it isn’t the transition to the Subject as such. This is “shift” to the middle area between the Object and the Subject, to the transcendental area, to the area of transcendental reality.

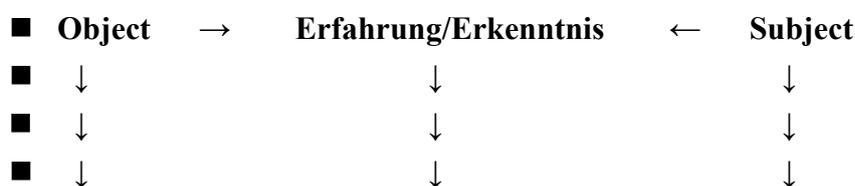
Let's represent this shift on next diagram: **Object → ??? ← Subject**

Kant named this area **Experience (Erfahrung)**, but it is possible to name it **Knowledge (Erkenntnis)**, because *knowledge* is located between the object and subject of cognition

Object → Erfahrung/Erkenntnis ← Subject

(Compare it with conception of “three worlds” of K.Popper or intentional reality of E.Husserl)

Cognition of this area of Experience belongs to transcendental philosophy. This is third modi of metaphysic, transcendental paradigm of metaphysics.



■ Transcendent --- Transcendental --- Immanent
metaphysics metaphysics metaphysics

Part 2. How is metaphysica naturalis possible?²

We argue that metaphysica naturalis roots in our language.

Metaphysics of the language is based on the simple fact that the thing and the word do not generally coincide, and there is always a certain tension between them since the word prescribed for the learning of the thing never totally apprehends it. The thing permanently changes while the word apprehends only the static section cut, the ‘trait’ it left, not being able to grasp every next change in the thing. In this sense, the thing is always richer than the word which is never able to describe a particular thing in its totality, in abundance of its content, and multiplicity of changes. But in other aspect, the word becomes richer than the thing.

Consider an elementary cognitive act. For example, we can see a house and we are fixing this in a description as “This is a house”. Let’s try to reveal in this example the main metaphysical points of our language.

First of all, we pay attention to the point that, accurately speaking, we have no right to call a [one] thing what we perceive in experience. Something which is behind me is rather a “*This 1*”. The next moment, (due to my and its change) “*This 1*” turns into “*This 2*”, etc. To fix all those (multiple) temporal modi as one thing (a *house*), we must undertake Kantian synthesis of apprehension which turns manifold of sensitive intuition into the *image* of a thing (unity vs. multiplicity). Meanwhile, a transfer to another, more expanded range of observation takes place: from various color spots generating in our eye’s retina (resp. on the TV screen) we synthesize images of these or those objects (sensitivity vs. imagination).

In addition, our metaphysical mind transforms two-dimensional images of the house in a three-dimensional (three-dimensional) image.

Secondly, the *notion* “house” is wider than we can perceive here and now, of *this-very-house*. The notion “house” applies to not only this one thing but also to other *such* things. This generalizing notion subordinates not only *today* and here situated house but also *yesterday’s* and/or *tomorrow’s* one as well as houses situated in other places. Moreover, the *notion* applies to *possible* objects of the type. And our description is fixing the fact of perception not of a particular house but rather a *house in general* (scheme of a house, under Kant), which can be expressed, for example, in the English grammar by the indefinite article (“*a house*”).

² 1. Katrechko Serguei. *Metaphysics of the Language and the Language of Metaphysics* //Papers of the 32nd International Wittgenstein Symposium (Band XVII). — Kirchberg am Wessel, 2009, pp. 190 – 192. 2. Катречко С.Л. *Метафизика как метафизика языка* //Материалы V Российского философского конгресса. Новосибирск: Параллель, 2009. Т.1. с.28 – 29 (in Russian).

Thirdly, let's note that in our description the "house" is a term of a definite type, namely a noun. This is due to the fact that a language is a *heterogenous* formation, and, while "operating", it *categorically marks out* the reality distinguishing among the apprehended content what we call *things (essences)*. Furthermore, to put it precisely, we do not perceive things, and even less their essences; human senses apprehend not the *essences* (or things per se) but only their *properties* (noun vs. adjective). For example, our eyes can perceive grey color but the language fixes this metaphysically telling that "something grey" is perceived, where *something* acts as an essence (substance) for the properties perceived in experience. In further sentences like "This is a grey break house..." (*quality*) and/or "This house is three meters high" (*quantity*), we specify this metaphysical act distinguishing and fixing different types of category.

But metaphysical character of a language is related not only with its conceptual and categorial nature. Any language is a *connected structure*, and it contains some *logic structure*, having an a priori character. Under Kant, coherence intrinsic in our language (thinking) is brought into the environment by us. E.g. all the laws of classical physics that express this or that *causality* are predetermined by a logical form of implication in language. Of course, no law can be formulated without specific experimental content but, had our language lacked a particular logic form to express laws, we could not formulate any law *in principle*. Moreover, if our language contained other logic forms then the laws would have quite another display. For example, if implication contained not two, but three or more components.

According to Kant our worldview is determined by *a priori* forms. The language as a whole contains its own metaphysics and metaphysics *per se* presupposes discovery and analysis of non-experimental knowledge component, which is revealed in the language.

In this case, we accept Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity hypothesis, which is very close to Kant. It argues that the *physics* or structure of the physical world is predetermined by the *meta-physics* (resp. logical structure) of language we use.

Metaphysica naturalis is conceived as human reason speculation demand to arise and solve (by means of our language) questions that are beyond possible experience and exceed the limits of a current 'physical' situation (*KPR, B2I*). Hence, the man is considered (according to Kant) as **homo metaphysicum**.

Part 3 & 4. How is metaphysics as a science possible?³

³ 1. Катречко С.Л. Как возможна метафизика (в свете трансцендентальной перспективы) //Метафизика (научный журнал, РУДН), 2011, №1. с. 31 – 55. http://intelros.ru/pdf/metafizika/01_2011/03.pdf; in Russian); 2. Катречко С.Л. Как воз-

The scientific character of metaphysics means that it should be systematically structured and based on a certain principle. Moreover, although metaphysics is not a science in the same way as physics or mathematics, because it has a different structure, metaphysics as science is a *quasi-rational knowledge* aimed at studying *transcendentals* (Duns Scotus).

Metaphysics as a science consists of *metaphysica generalis*, which is a science of “being qua being” (or ontology), and *metaphysica specialis*, which consists of psychology, cosmology and theology. The reason and manifestation of both modes is language which contains special *metaphysical concepts -- transcendentalis*.

The possibility of metaphysica generalis (or transcendental ontology) is manifested by specific ontological (transcendental) predicates, i.e. categories in the Kantian sense, which exist in our language.

The possibility of metaphysica specialis (or transcendental metaphysics) is manifested by impredicative wholeness, or *encompassing totalities* (comp. with *the Encompassing (das Umgreifende)* of K. Jaspers), which determine the appropriate regional ontology (Husserl).

Transcendental ontology is the most developed of the Kantian concept. There are three its important parts:

- Kant’s copernican revolution;
- Kant's doctrine of a/the transcendental object;
- Kant's doctrine of categories.

The essence of transcendental ontology is that it is the ontology of transcendental area (see the diagram of Part 1 above). Thus, Kant rejects the possibility of transcendent ontology: how things in themselves actually we can’t know. In this regard, Rae Langton says about Kantian epistemic humility.

However, Kant extends the area of experience. Transcendental ontology is the metaphysics of **possible experience**. Instead of the standard relationship between some empirical object and subject Kant introduces the relationship between a/the **transcendental object** and a/the **transcendental subject** (= transcendental unity of apperception).

As said Ernst Cassirer world does not consist of things, but we see the world *thing-ly* or *subject-ly* (as thing, as subject). We learn not the objects, but object-ly.

Transcendental object is a intelligibilis reason of any (empirical) thing.

Every thing consists empirical content and transcendental form, or thing-form, i.e. form of transcendental object.

As I told above the reason and manifestation both of *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis* is language which contains special *metaphysical concepts, or transcendentalis*.

Metaphysica generalis defines transcendentals as categories or ontological predicates which are the general characteristics of (thing-)reality. From Kant's point of view their choice is defined by "the act of pure understanding", the ability of it to make judgment which brings forth the whole metaphysical structure and the most important are the categories of the third group, i.e. *inherence, causality* and *community*.

Community is especially important, because it is a fundamental of modern physics. This shows a real genius of Kant, because the contemporary natural science (Newton's physics) was based on the simpler category of causality.

The categories are non-*real*, but *formal* predicates, which derive special transcendental meaning of judgments, i.e. they are characteristics of our world frame. Thus, transcendental *metaphysica generalis* is formal ontology, or the general theory of object as it was understood by Husserl.

In *metaphysica specialis* these concepts are *totalities*. In contrast to categories, they are non-predicative. Logically they are based not on the «genus/species» principle, but on the «part/whole» principle (that is why we call them totalities). The most important of them is the concept of Being. The other totalities (for example, Kant's "transcendental ideas") are used as local background knowledge, which specify the Being and help to specify the ontological place of different categories of being.

At the same time metaphysical totalities are *Comprehensive* (cf. *the Encompassing* of K. Jaspers) for a subject of knowledge as well as for a special region of being. A man is inside the totalities and can't "leap out" of them. For example, a man is inside the World.

That is why totalities can't become *objects* of scientific knowledge. They are *meta-objects*, or **metaphysical "objects"** (or metaphysical entities).

The difference between metaphysical predicates and totalities is the basis for the difference between *dialectics* (Plato) and *logics* (Aristotle). Plato's Holotes is different from Plurality, because all the parts of Holotes are united by the common idea into a Unity, whereas the parts of Plurality are not united in this way. It is accidental and mechanical (sf. organism vs. machinery). In the 20th century the scientists try to formalize "part/wholeness" relations, i.e. creating the logics of totalities (for ex. "Mereology" of Lesniewski or "Logical Investigation" of Husserl).

- See this talk/paper/presentation:
- <http://transcendental.ucoz.ru/forum/9-42-1#4554>
- http://transcendental.ucoz.ru/_fr/0/katr_wcp2013.pptx
- http://transcendental.ucoz.ru/_fr/0/katrechko_wcp20.docx
- <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0RKM8VfSxJPOWdPZkIFMDhwMW8>
- <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0RKM8VfSxJPeThnM2JVuUhuNTA>